

The *Axe* at the *Root*

OF THE

Innovation

OF

SINGING

In the Worship of God ;

Lately sprung up to the trouble of many,  
and the defiling of others.

OR,

Some brief *Queries* ; with an Introduction proposed to the  
Singers in the popular way of singing Psalms, as trans-  
lated, and Tunes as invented, and as now sung together  
by the Professor and Prophane, as an Ordinance of God.

DESIGNED

For the Preservation of Right Worship, especially in the  
Churches of Christ, that have upon the declaration of  
their Faith been Baptized.

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By a Baptist.

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*In vain do they Worship me, teaching for Doctrine the  
Commandments of Men, Matth. 15. 9.*

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LONDON, Printed in the Year 1696.



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## To all Christians of the Baptized Congregations, Salutation.

*Dearly Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ,*

**H**A V I N G been conversant amongst you for Forty years past, I cannot be supposed ignorant of your Practises in Matters of Worship; and am well assured (notwithstanding some Differences in Matters of lesser moment) you have maintained the Essentials of Salvation, and Church Communion, to your great commendation. But of late, there hath arisen amongst you certain Persons who have troubled the Peace of the Churches, and have occasioned Divisions, to the Grief of many, by innovating a Form of Worship never practised (as I find in all Histories) by any of your Brethren before you: Nor indeed in the World by any other, till about the time of *Beza* and *Calvin*, in the last Century. And that is, to sing in Rhyme by a set Form, and that by all the People together; whether Saints or Sinners, Members or no Members, whether they are Young or Old, understand or not understand what is sung.

For the Reverend *Ri. Watson* Doctor of Divinity, in his Book printed at *London*, Anno 1684. about this Subject, *Pag. 19.* saith thus, *The Original of this Device, (viz. of turning the Psalms of David into Rhime and Metre) was not in England, but first taken up by one Clement Marrot, a Groom of the Bed-chamber to the French King Francis the First, and having told us how he made songs for the King to sing. He adds Pag. 20. That he was prevailed with by Fr. Vatablus; to relinquish his trifling Doggerel, and to turn David's Psalms into French Metre, and he did the first 30. and that the King sung them as he had done his former Ballads. And as he afterwards tells us, He went to Geneva, and was encouraged by Beza and Calvin, and that afterwards he turned 20 more into Rhyme, by their means and procurement; and that the Papists were Strangers to, and Enemies against this Novel Practice, is plain: For that the Doctors of the Sorbon complained of it to the King, and procured an Edict against the use thereof. But he went to Geneva and there it was imbraced. Now to know about what time this was, we may guess by an Eminent Passage in History. That disturbance given to the Duke of Guise, by those who sung Marot's Psalms, Anno 1562. and for that Marot was with Calvin at Geneva; and the other is noted, as hapning quickly after they began to put these Rhymes of his into Practice: It must have its Original from or about that time.*

Therefore we may infer from thence, as we usually do on another Subject. We say, that seeing our Adversaries cannot prove from Scripture or any Authentick History, that any Infant was Baptized in the first two Centuries,

Centuries, it was because the same was not commanded by Christ, nor taught by his Apostles. And surely the case will hold good here also, seeing that 1500 years past, since our Saviours time, and no instance to be given of any Church of Christ that ever sung in Rhyme.

Now were there no other Objection against it than only the form of its performance, it is not a matter so slightly to be passed over; because your selves deny Sprinkling to be Baptism, purely from a wrong Form used in the manner of applying the Water to the Person that is to be Baptized.

Besides, the Learned among you know, That it could not be the Practice of the *Jewish* Church to sing in Rhyme; because neither the Song of *Moses*, *Deborah*, nor the Book of Psalms, as they are in the *Hebrew*, are any of them in Rhyme, but all in Prose: And yet certainly they must acknowledge the *Jews* had as great an Obligation upon them to perform it in that mode as any now, in case it had been an essential part of Singing. Moreover the *Jews* amongst us at this day, do believe they sing, and in the same manner their Fore-fathers did; and yet all they do is in Prose, not in Rhyme.

And I am as certain, there is no such Form of Singing expressed in the New Testament to be practised by Christ, or his Apostles, or the Primitive Churches; Nor as yet have I met with any of our Brethren of a contrary Persuasion, who have asserted it, altho their Practice indeed is otherwise; for they all sing in Rhyme: And when it hath been demanded of them, why they sung in a Form different from the Church of the *Jews* of old, and also from that of the *Primitive Christians*? They have Answered,

swered, because they knew not how to sing otherwise. I might make some Reflections upon this, which might not be very pleasing ; but I design Truth and not Division, and therefore shall forbear. As to the other parts which belong to this Controversy, I find the Assertors of it are divided among themselves ; some having pleaded for it as a Duty simply Moral, and so no need of a Gospel Precept. Others, they have pleaded for it in both senses, and therefore think themselves at liberty to argue either. And others, in the latter only as a Gospel Institution ; and some as partly Legal, and partly Evangelical, *viz.* The singing it self in the latter, but the Form of doing it, and the Persons performing it, they take from the former, *viz.* the Law. And therefore, till they are better agreed in the State of the Controversy, I shall refer the whole matter to the Answer which shall be given to the following Paper, which (in my Opinion) comprehends the true state of the Case. And if our Brethren will please to answer these *Queries*, it may be great satisfaction to the Doubting. Whereas if they must go without a particular and due Answer, they will serve to keep me and others in our present and antient Practice ; and we ought not to be blamed by our Brethren, for refusing to admit any thing into the Church as an Ordinance which we have not a sufficient Authority for, from the New Testament ; because some of them cannot but know, that all those Corruptions that are found in the Church of *Rome*, were not brought in at once, but by degrees. Yea, even the *Mass* it self was brought in by divers Popes, at more than 12 several times ; as for instance, one he appointed the *Confiteor*, another the *Introitus*, another the *Kyrie Eleyson*, another the *Gloria in Excelsis*, another the

the *Gradual*, another the *Offertorium*, another the *Canon*, another the *Memento*, another the *Te igitur*, another the *Agnus Dei*; with other things too tedious to relate, which has made it so monstrous a piece of Worship as it is now found to be. And altho' I do allow, that what our Brethren have done in bringing in this of Singing into the Church, is not in it self a matter of the greatest moment; yet if by the same Rule we should have Forms of Prayer introduc'd next, and after that other things, which might also by degrees upon the same Foundation be innovated; it might tend to the utter ruine of Primitive Christianity, which they know fell out in the first Grand Apostacy. But hoping our Brethren design no such thing, and that God will always stir up some of his faithful Servants to oppose it, if attempted. I shall say no more, but refer you to the *Queries* themselves, which I judge may be fit to be published for the benefit of those concerned, so far as appears to me upon the reading of them: For I assure you, I am not the Author thereof, and therefore will not assume that to my self which is the Product of the Labour and Study of one, much better skilled in this Controversy.

But upon the request of the Publisher, have thought fit to write this Introduction.

Q U E R Y.



# Q U E R Y,

1. **V**Hether or no the word Sung, be not added in *Matth.* 26, 30. and in *Mark* 14. 16. and in *Acts* 16. 25. and in *Heb.* 2. 12. For in none of those places the term *Sung* is to be found as is affirmed?

2. Whether the Translators have done well in adding to the Word of God?

3. Whether they do well that justify the Translators who have so done it?

4. Whether they that Preach, and Print, and confidently urge from those Texts they *sung*, do not deceive others, and justify the Translators in their adding to God's Word?

5. Whether those Translations that read that, when they had Hymned, or given Thanks, be not more agreeable to the Truth?

6. Whether the Term *ὑμνούντες*, *Hymnesantes*, doth not as strongly imply, that they lamented, as that they sung and rejoiced?

7. Whether there is not a greater probability, that they Mourned or Lamented, than that they sung and rejoiced at that time?

*Note*, Now altho' you cannot take this Point from us, neither can we give it you; yet seeing you will insist upon it right or wrong, make your best on't, and answer these following Queries.

8. Whether



8. Whether or no if Christ and all the Apostles sung the Hymn together, that the Hymn that they thus sung did not belong to the Passover, and ceased with the Passover?

9. Whether or no as there was a Hymn belonging to the Passover, there was not a necessity they should sing the Hymn as belonging to the Passover; otherwise, how could it be said they kept the Passover?

10. Whether or no they sung two Hymns, the one belonging to the Passover, and ceased with it; and the other belonging to the Lord's Supper, and remaining?

11. Whether or no if it beas'tis said, that they sung together, and went out singing, that they returned back to conclude with Prayer, as now you generally do; but where is your President for it?

12. Whether (notwithstanding all that you have said) there is either Precept or President for your singing either at the Lord's Supper, or before, or after your Sermons? If you have, you are desired to produce it; for that will end the Controversy about it: but nothing short of that will.

But seeing some of the Singers stick not to this, but fly to the Law for their Refuge: As those seventeen Gentlemen, whose hands are put to a Pamphlet, Entituled, *A Sober Reply, &c.* do assert in their third Argument. *If singing Gods Praises were under the Law with Voices lift up together, and the Saints are in the New Testament required to sing, and no other way is prescribed or laid down how they should sing: Then the Saints in the New Testament ought to sing as they sang under the Old. But such was the singing of Gods People under the Law, and the Churches are enjoyned to sing Psalms in the New Testament*

stament, and no other way prescribed or laid down how they should sing. Ergo. The Churches are now to sing in the times of the Gospel, as Gods People under the Law. Therefore let them answer these Queries following:

13. Whether or no the *Jews* when they sung in the Temple, or else-where, what they sung was not in Prose?

14. Whether or no any sung in the Temple Worship, but the Singers only?

15. Whether singing was not an Office instituted of God for his Worship in the Temple, and performed by the *Levites* only?

16. Whether all the *Levites* sung together, or only *Asaph*, *Heman* and *Jeduthan*, and their Sons and Bretheren?

17. Whether they had not a chief Chanter, to give Instructions in the Song to the Singers?

18. Whether or no the Singers were not commanded to be clothed in White Linnen?

19. Whether or no they were not commanded to sing with Musick, viz. with Cymbals, Psalteries and Harps?

20. Whether the Priests themselves were not appointed with their Trumpets, to join with the Singers in their singing?

21. Whether or no all the Congregation which Assembled together, ever sung with the *Levites*?

22. Whether the *Jews* ever sung in their Synagogue Worship?

23. Whether or no singing in our Cathedrals (if we must take our Rules from Legal Practices) be not a more agreeable Practice than yours? for they Sing in Prose, and have Musick, and are clothed in White Lin-  
nen,

men, and have Choristers, with a Chaunter to give instructions: but you have none of these.

24. Yet whether or no these Practices are not condemned by all judicious Christians, as superstitious; and seeing you plead for your Singing from the same Authority, what can yours be less?

25. Whether it be not a strange Doctrine, that there is no Direction how to sing in all the Gospel?

26. If this be true, (as 'tis said) then whether it is not more strange that we having no Direction, should be necessitated to sing as they sung under the Law?

27. Whether it be not most strange, that instead of following those Directions they have given, they should set up a way of Singing, in direct opposition to that as practised under the Law?

28. Whether or no 1 Cor. 14. 15. where the Apostle Paul saith, *He will sing with the Spirit, and with Understanding also*, was not only Direction to the Church, but a President also, whatever they have said to the contrary.

29. Whether or no what the Apostle Paul hath said in Eph. 5. 18, 19. if it be a Precept; that be not the Precept, *Not to be drunk with Wine; but be filled with the Spirit*: implying, that if they were not filled with the Spirit, they could not speak to themselves in Psalms and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: And in Coloss. 3. 16. *That the Word of Christ must dwell richly in them, in all Wisdom*; implying, that otherwise they could not admonish one another in Psalms and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, nor sing with grace in their Hearts; and surely, this is most agreeable to the Apostles Doctrine and Practices whatever is, or can be said to the contrary?

30. Whether

30. Whether or no it were not better to pluck off the Mask, and give over your Singularity, and join with the other Auxiliaries, and rest in what you practise, even in the Psalms as Translated into English Metre, with the Tunes as printed and allowed to be sung by all people together, before and after Sermons, and before and after their Prayers? For, is it not a clear case, that if they were then Translated in English Metre, they were never Translated before? and if they were then allowed and appointed to be sung, they were not allowed nor appointed before. And never talk of repairing the Breach; for if there ever was a Breach, it was then repaired, or it is not yet repaired.

But ceasing at present, hoping some of the great Singers will Answer these Queries; it is also desired they would Answer this one Argument; for 'tis not questioned but it is of more weight than those Three that have been levyed against it, tho' ushered into the world with the Authority of seventeen Hands.

That which Christ our great Law-giver never commanded, nor his Apostles in his Name never taught, nor practised, cannot be a Gospel Duty.

But Christ never commanded, nor his Apostles never taught nor practised in his Name, that ever a Christian Congregation, when Congregated together, should sing Psalms or Hymns promiscuously, or all together, both Men and Women, Young and Old, Boys and Girls, Professors and Prophane.

Therefore such a singing of Psalms or Hymns by a Christian Congregation, when congregated together, is not a Duty.



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